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P R 282101Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0836
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY LISBON
USNMR SHAPE
USMISSION USNATO
USCINCEUR
DIA WASHDC
USMISSION USUN
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
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AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
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MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLADS

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: MARCHAIS REFUSES TO COMPROMISE

SUMMARY. IN 88 PAGES AND SOME THREE HOURS, COMMUNIST (PCF) LEADER GEORGES MARCHAIS OPENED THE APRIL 26-27 CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING WITH A REPORT WHICH COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN LESS COMPROMISING:

- DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM REMAINS INDISPENSABLE FOR A REVOLUTIONARY, AVANT-GARDE PARTY; THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO QUESTION OF TURNING THE PCF INTO A DISCUSSION CLUB", OF DISMANTLING THE PARTY IN THE NAME OF "SOME VAGUE, PETIT-BOURGEOIS ANARCHISM;"
- THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) BEARS TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEFEAT OF THE LEFT IN MARCH *)(;
- PCF STRATEGY AND TACTICS SINCE 1972 ARE APPROVED BY THE "IMMENSE MAJORITY" OF THE PARTY;
- IN THIS, "THE MOST DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN FRANCE", OPEN TRIBUNES IN THE PARTY PRESS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED UNTIL THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE 23RD CONGRESS, WHOSE DATE WILL NOT BE ADVANCED FROM EARLY 1979.

MARCHAIS HAS MET EVERY CRITICISM OF THE PAST MONTH HEAD-ON, REFUSING ALL BUT THE MOST SUPERFICIAL CONCESSIONS AND RELEGATING INTELLECTUAL OPPOSITION TO THE REALM OF "IGNORANCE AND OPPORTUNISM." WHILE PARTY LEADERSHIP ADMITS THAT DISCUSSION HAS NEVER BEEN MORE LIVE-CONFIDENTIAL

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LY, THE SHORT-TERM DECISION HAS BEEN TO CUT THE DEBATE SHORT, ALTHOUGH THE ROOT CAUSES OF DISCONTENT HAVE NOT BEEN ADDRESSED. IN THE FACE OF A STILL MONOLITHIC PARTY APPARATUS, FURTHER DISSENT WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT TO GENERATE, AT LEAST UNTIL PREPARATIONS FOR THE 23RD CONGRESS BEGIN. END SUMMARY.

1. UNANIMITY AS USUAL: ALTHOUGH FEW OBSERVERS EXPECTED ANY REAL CONCESSIONS, GEORGES MARCHAIS' APRIL 26 REPORT TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WAS STRIKING FOR ITS CATEGORICAL AND EVEN BRUTAL REFUTATION OF ALL CRITICISMS DIRECTED AT THE PCF DURING THE PAST MONTH. ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, MARCHAIS' LENGTHY DEFENSE OF PARTY TACTICS SINCE THE COMMON PROGRAM WAS SIGNED IN 1972 AND HIS TOTAL EMPHASIS ON CONTINUITY -- FROM INTERNAL PARTY OPERATIONS TO THE STRATEGY OF BOTH THE COMMON PROGRAM AND THE UNION OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE -- ARE AMPLE DEMONSTRATION THAT CHANGE WILL COME VERY SLOWLY TO THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY.

2. "THE MOST DEMOCRATIC PARTY": CONGRATULATING THE PARTY ON A "SERIOUS, INTERESTING AND POSITIVE DISCUS-

SION," MARCHAIS NOTED THAT, WHILE MOST DEBATE WAS MOTIVATED BY A DESIRE TO BETTER ANALYZE THE PCF'S ACTIVITIES, THERE WERE ALSO THOSE WHO ACTED OUT OF IGNORANCE, INCOMPREHENSION OR OPPORTUNISM. AS FOR THE CONCLUSIONS OF THIS "GRAND DEBATE", AN "IMMENSE MAJORITY" OF THE PARTY AGREES WITH THE POLICIES WHICH THE PCF HAS ADOPTED AND WITH THE ACTIONS OF THE LEADERSHIP. WILL THE DISCUSSION CONTINUE? ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY, AS MARCHAIS HAS SET THE PARTY MACHINERY FIRMLY AGAINST SUCH CONTINUATION

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AND HAS EXPLICITLY RULED OUT OPEN TRIBUNES IN THE PARTY PRESS, CITING PCF REGULATIONS TO THE CONTRARY. IN ONE OF HIS FEW COMPROMISING REMARKS, HE DID SAY THAT THE 23RD CONGRESS COULD DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO RETAIN THESE RULES.

3. DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM -- THE KEY TO COMBAT POTENTIAL: MARCHAIS HAD PARTICULARLY HARSH WORDS FOR THOSE WHO WOULD DILUTE DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM, "THE SUREST MEANS TO WEAKEN THE PARTY AND TO LIQUIDATE ITS COMBAT POTENTIAL." TO THOSE WHO WANT THE COMMUNIST PRESS TO REFLECT A "PERMANENT DISCUSSION OF EVERYTHING AND ANYTHING", MARCHAIS REPLIED NEVER, FOR IN SO DOING THE PARTY MACHINERY, "DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED BY SECRET BALLOT", WOULD BE BY-PASSED. THE PCF IS A "REVOLUTIONARY, AVANT-GARDE PARTY, NOT A DISCUSSION CLUB", AND AS SUCH MUST HAVE STRUCTURES AND REGULATIONS WHICH ALLOW IT TO FULFILL ITS COMBAT ROLE. RETURNING TO A THEME STRESSED IN HIS LE MONDE ARTICLE BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, MARCHAIS SAID: "THE PCF IN ITS INTERNAL OPERATION IS NOT TRYING TO REFLECT EXISTING SOCIETY, ANY MORE THAN THE PARTY SEEKS TO IMPOSE ITS OWN OPERATING STYLE ON SOCIETY." FOR THOSE WHO HAD HOPED THAT DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM MIGHT BE ON THE AGENDA FOR CHANGE, MARCHAIS LEFT NO ROOM FOR MANEUVER, OTHER THAN A REFERENCE TO THE CONTINUING TASK OF "PERFECTING" THE CONCEPT.

4. THE PS TAKES THE BLAME: RECOUNTING IN DETAIL THE HISTORY OF THE COMMON PROGRAM, MARCHAIS CHARACTERIZED IT NOT AS A PANACEA BUT ONLY AS "A STEP FORWARD, NOTHING LESS BUT NOTHING MORE." THE PCF RECOGNIZED FROM 1972

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THAT THE SIMPLE FACT OF SIGNING THE COMMON PROGRAM DID NOT IN ITSELF GUARANTEE "THE SOLIDITY OF THE UNION, ELECTORAL VICTORY OR THE SUCCESS OF THE EXPERIENCE" AND THAT THE BATTLE WOULD BE DIFFICULT IN RESISTING SOCIALIST

TEMPTATIONS TOWARD SOCIAL DEMOCRACY. IN HIS ONLY SELF-CRITICISM, MARCHAIS AGREED THAT HIS REPORT OF JUNE 29, 1972, LAYING OUT THESE CONSIDERATIONS, SHOULD HAVE BEEN MADE PUBLIC SOONER (BEFORE 1975) SO THAT THE PARTY WOULD HAVE REALIZED THAT THE COMMON PROGRAM WAS NOT "A MAGIC CARPET TO THE LAND OF MIRACLES."

5. ACCORDING TO MARCHAIS, THE PS BEGAN ITS BETRAYAL OF THE COMMON PROGRAM ONLY DAYS AFTER ITS SIGNATURE WITH MITTERRAND'S JUNE 28, 1972, STATEMENT THAT THE SOCIALISTS HOPED TO WIN THREE MILLION OF THE PCF'S FIVE MILLION VOTES. THE SOCIALIST STRATEGY THROUGHOUT THE SIX YEARS 1972-1978 WAS ALWAYS TO STRENGTHEN ITSELF AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PCF, TO KEEP ITS OPTIONS OPEN SO THAT IT MIGHT ADOPT A POLICY WHICH "COULD ONLY CONSIST OF FOLLOWING THAT OF THE RIGHT."

6. A MISCELLANY OF CRITICISM: RESPONDING TO OTHER CRITICISMS WHICH HAVE BEEN LEVELED AGAINST THE PCF IN RECENT WEEKS, MARCHAIS MET ALL OF THEM HEAD-ON AND GAVE HARDLY AN INCH:

--FOR THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES (WITHOUT SPECIFYING ANY IN PARTICULAR), "IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DENY THEIR POSITIVE ROLE IN THE EVOLUTION OF HUMANITY" -- THE PCF WILL "NEVER RENOUNCE ITS INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY" WITH SUCH NATIONS. HOWEVER, THESE COUNTRIES CANNOT SERVE AS MODELS NOR CAN IT BE DENIED THAT THERE ARE DIVERGENCES ON THE QUESTION OF DEMOCRACY, AN AREA WHERE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES HAVE FURTHER DETERIORATED SINCE THE 22ND CONGRESS.

-- AS FOR THOSE WHO CRITICIZED COMMUNIST ELECTORAL

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EMPHASIS ON THE POOREST CLASSES THROUGH THE SLOGAN "MAKE THE RICH PAY", MARCHAIS DEFENDED THE TACTIC UNCONDITIONALLY, THUS IMPLICITLY ABANDONING THE OPENING TO OTHER SOCIAL CLASSES CALLED FOR BY THE UNION OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE. THE UNION OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE NEVERTHELESS REMAINS THE CATCH-PHASE FOR PCF STRATEGY AND ONE WHICH IS WHOLLY COMPATIBLE WITH THE PARTY'S EMPHASIS ON THE LEAST-FAVORED ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY, SAYS GEORGES MARCHAIS.

7. COMMENT: THE OVERALL IMPRESSION OF MARCHAIS' REPORT IS ONE OF REMARKABLE CONTINUITY IN THAT THE PARTY LINE OF THE LAST SIX YEARS IS DEFENDED WITHOUT NUANCE AND OF TOTAL DEFIANCE OF THOSE PARTY MEMBERS WHO HAVE CHOSEN TO SPEAK OUT IN RECENT WEEKS. IN FACT, MARCHAIS PROBA-

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BLY HAD LITTLE CHOICE SINCE A CONCILIATORY APPROACH WOULD HAVE OPENED THE FLOOD GATES TO FURTHER CRITICISM, ALL OF WHICH WORKS DIRECTLY AGAINST MARCHAIS' OWN INTERESTS IN DEFENDING HIS LEADERSHIP ROLE. THE UNCOMPROMISING LINE MAY ALSO REFLECT THE LEADERSHIP'S EVALUATION OF THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT AS RELATIVELY FEEBLE AND CERTAINLY UNCOORDINATED AND WHICH CAN BE MORE QUICKLY SUFFOCATED OR AT LEAST CONTROLLED BY BRINGING TO BEAR THE WEIGHT OF PARTY MACHINERY. THERE MAY ALSO BE A BELIEF AT THE TOP THAT NOW IS CERTAINLY NOT THE TIME FOR PRECIPITOUS CHANGE IN PARTY STRATEGY. INDEED, IF ANY CHANGES AT ALL ARE IN THE WORKS, THEY SEEM DESTINED TO SURFACE ONLY IN THE METICULOUSLY PREPARED CONTEXT OF THE 23RD CONGRESS. BUT IF THE MARCHAIS REPORT IS ANY INDICATION, THE DOOR TO CHANGE WILL NOT OPEN MORE THAN A TINY CRACK AND EVEN THAT RELUCTANTLY.

8. MUCH DEPENDS ON HOW DEEP THE CURRENT DISCONTENT REALLY RUNS. IT IS CLEAR THAT MOST OF THE PARTY HAS NO IMMEDIATE DESIRE TO ENGAGE IN A PROFOUND DEBATE WHICH WOULD WEAKEN THE PCF EVEN FURTHER IN THE WAKE OF THE LEFT'S ELECTORAL DEFEAT. NONETHELESS, THERE ARE CONVINCING SIGNS THAT A NON-NEGLIGIBLE CURRENT EXISTS WHICH SEES THE COMMUNIST LONG-TERM STRATEGY IN TERMS OF LIBERALIZATION, AS FOR INSTANCE ON THE ITALIAN MODEL. WHETHER THIS CURRENT CAN RESIST THE TREMENDOUS PRESSURES OF THE PCF MACHINE AND WHETHER IT WILL BE SUPPORTED EVENTUALLY BY ELEMENTS OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP ARE BIG QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE. THE HARD FACT FOR THE LEADERSHIP REMAINS THAT THE PCF LOST GROUND IN 1978 AFTER AN UNPRECEDENTED EFFORT AT MOBILIZATION. THAT REALITY ALONE

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MUST CAUSE AT LEAST SOME COMMUNIST LEADERS TO REFLECT ON THE LONG-TERM DESIRABILITY OF A TACTICAL REORIENTATION, EVEN THOUGH SUCH A MANEUVER WOULD BE TOO RISKY AT THE PRESENT TIME. THE TURMOIL OF THE PAST MONTH HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE IS A CONSTITUENCY WITHIN THE PARTY WHICH PROBABLY CANNOT CREATE EVOLUTIONARY MOMENTUM ALL BY ITSELF, BUT CAN BE EASILY MOBILIZED WHEN THE HIERARCHY DECIDES THE TIME IS RIPE.
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